



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## FRENCH HOUSE FURNISHING.

By THEODORE CHILD.

## THE DINING-ROOM.

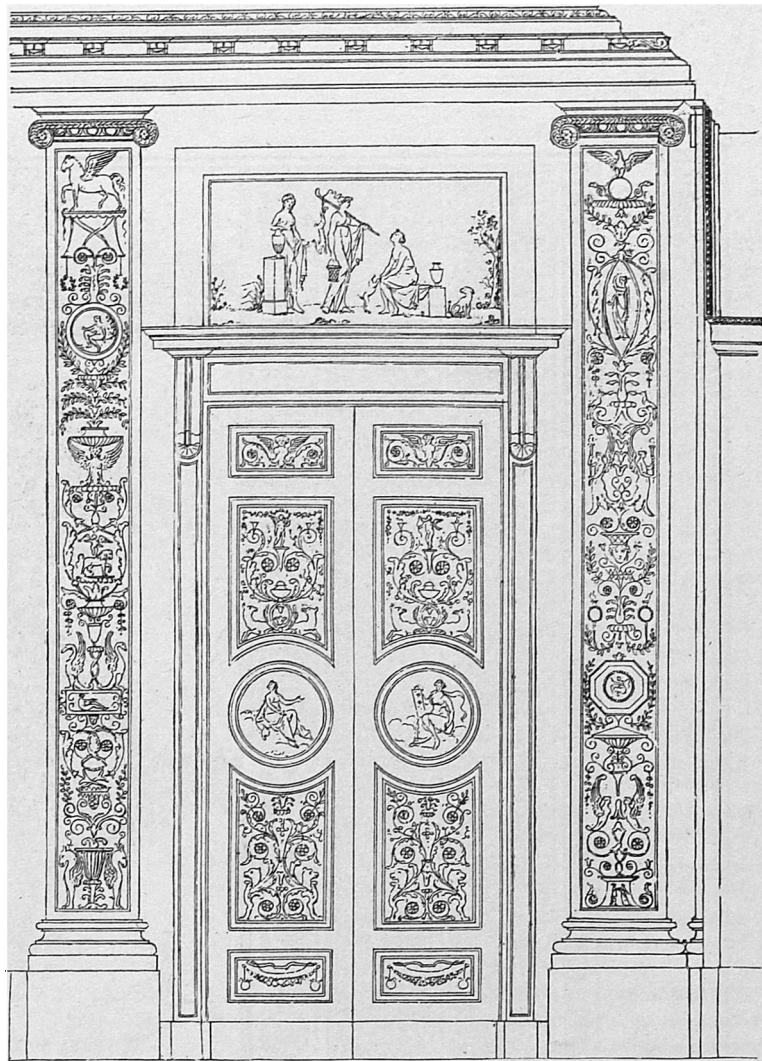
IN FRANCE, where cookery is recognized as an art, very little decoration is generally bestowed on the room in which food is served. The idea of the French, doubtless, is that the best ornament for a dining-room is a well-cooked dinner; hence the immense majority of French dining rooms have a simple parquet or quarried floor, a table and the necessary chairs, a small buffet for the requisite utensils, and in one corner a white enameled faience stove with brass bands. The walls are often wainscoted half way up and papered the rest; over the table hangs a lamp and shade of the kind known as a suspension, and there is an end of the furniture of the dining-room. In France, it must be remembered, the dining-room is not a sitting room; it is simply an eating-room used twice a day for luncheon and for dinner, as the early breakfast is served generally in the bed rooms. Indeed, so little attention is paid by the ordinary French family to the decoration or even comfort of the dining-room that a mere passage or ante-chamber is frequently utilized for eating. I do not recommend these practices, I simply state the fact.

The furniture of these ordinary dining-rooms will, of course, have no lessons to teach us, although we Anglo-Saxons might take a hint often from the simplicity of the general arrangement, a simplicity which is noticeable even in the most luxurious Parisian dining-rooms as compared with the heavy and pompous splendor of the dining-rooms of London or New York. In the French dining-room the principal object is the table in all the senses of the word, and in the cult of the table and of everything connected therewith, the French seem to have inherited the traditions of Roman civilization. Lucullus, Hortensius, Apicius of old, owed much of their celebrity to their table; in modern times the tables of Mazarin, Fouquet, Condé, Samuel Bernard, d'Aguesseau, and Mme. de Pompadour have their place marked in the annals of French gastronomy. The names of some of the noblest families of the old regime in France have been immortalized in connection with certain dishes of special quality. What more striking proof could we desire of the importance attached by the French to the table, than this expression of sentiments of justice and gratitude?

The form of table preferred by the French is round, with capacity of prolongation by means of inserted leaves, which convert it into a long table with round ends. Rectangular tables are also used, but rarely. The proportions observed by the best makers in this table are that the length may exceed the breadth by one quarter, one third, one half, and, very exceptionally, by three-quarters for large company. Above these proportions the equilibrium is destroyed, and the service loses its fine order and unity. The size of the table is to be calculated on the basis of an allowance of 33 inches of space to each diner, and in order to ensure free

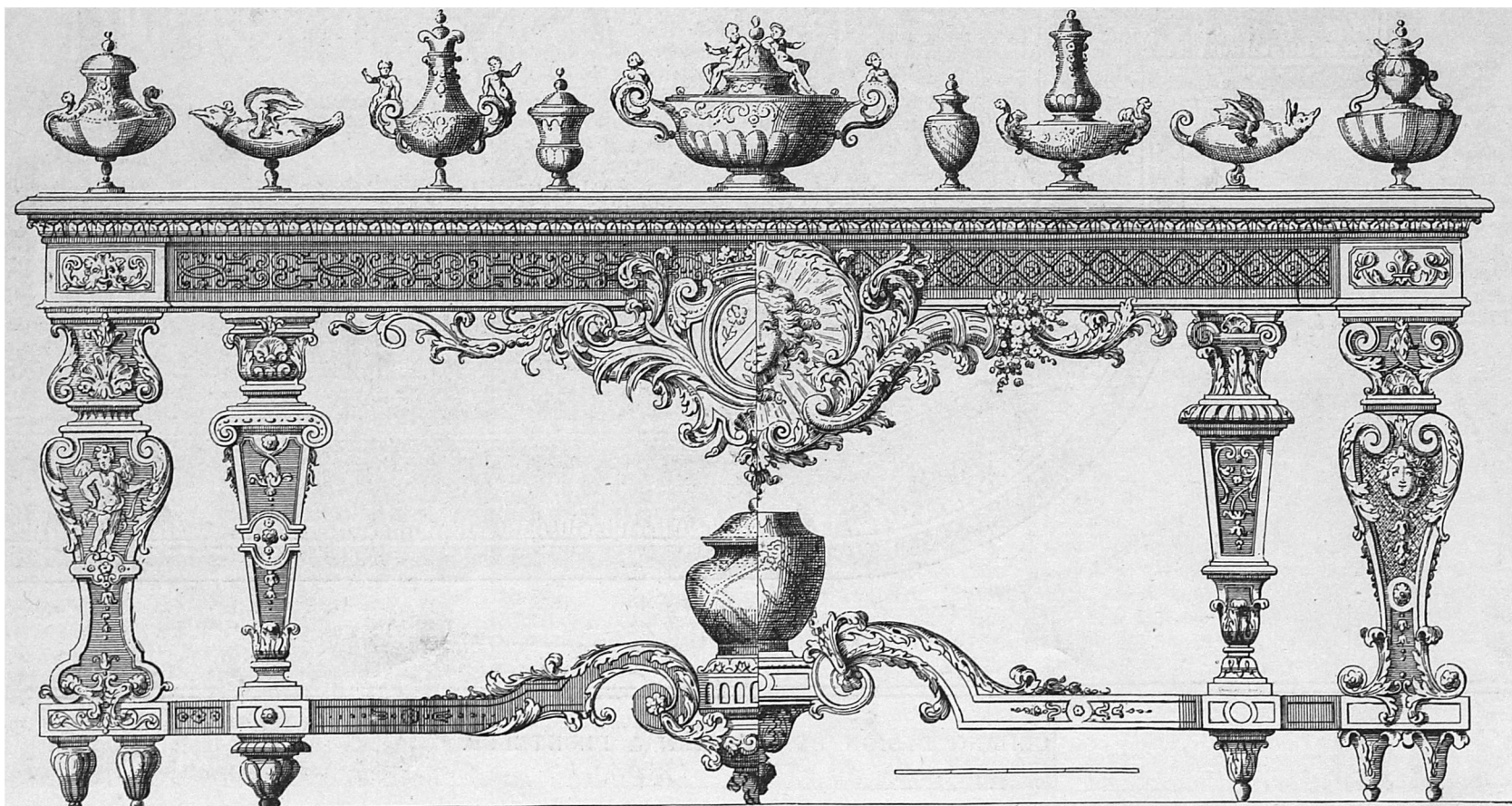
circulation and perfect waiting, a space of six feet is demanded between the wall and the backs of the diners' chairs. In accordance with these measures which are laid down by the experience of the persons most interested in a dinner, namely those who eat it and those who serve it, the dining-room ought to be constructed. The reader need not fear that this ample room implies an immense development of the *salle-à-manger*; from the remotest antiquity the number of guests has always been strictly limited by gastronomists; Lucilius and Brillat-Savarin agree in fixing the ideal number not higher than that of the Muses and not lower than that of the Graces. As for the shape of the French dining-room, it follows that of the table and is oblong, often an elongated octagon, and rarely oval. In all houses where any care and thought have been bestowed on the interior arrangement, the dining-room is provided with two doors at least, one communicating with the salon by which the guests arrive, and the other communicating with the butler's room through which the service is effected; generally this latter door is masked by a handsome screen behind which all the details connected with the change of plates etc., are transacted unseen. A screen in front of the other door may often be used with advantage, as it makes the room look more cosy, and at the same time affords a good pretext for display of color.

The walls and ceiling of the dining-room lend themselves to great variety of decoration. Mme. de Pompadour's dining-room at Bellevue, was decorated with hunting and fishing scenes by Oudry, and the attributes of these sports were repeated on the woodwork of the fine carvings of Verbreck; the dining-rooms of the Bourbon epoch were panelled and decorated with paintings and carving; the dining-rooms of the Directory and First Empire were arranged in the antique fashion with stucco or marble, adorned with columns and pilasters and friezes, either with bare walls or with walls decorated with bas reliefs or Pompeian arabesques. In our own times the fashion has reverted to sombre dining-rooms panelled in the Henri II. or even Gothic style with heavy curtains and portières, Vandyke brown or red wall hangings, destined to set off faience, enamels, arms, etc., and monumental fire-places, mantel and fire dogs. This latter style is not nearly so reasonable in a dining-room as the Pompeian style; the man of arms, curtains, hanging, and bibelots of all kinds



BELLANGER'S DESIGN OF DOOR FOR MME. DERVIEUX. DIRECTORY.

collected in the modern Henri II. *salle-à-manger* absorb all the perfumes of the drinks and viands. In fact, in a reasonably decorated *salle-à-manger*, nothing but wood, paint, paper, or leather ought to be admitted as a wall covering. Furthermore archaic decoration is peculiarly out of place in a dining-room where the principal object, the table, when laid out for breakfast or dinner is radically and absolutely modern, as we shall see next month in treating more specially of the table service. In point of fact, the dining-room, the *salle-à-manger* as a room with fixed and definite attributions, did not exist until the last century, and at the palaces of Versailles, Marly, and the Tuileries, even in the reign of Louis XV., we find the king, the queen, and the princes taking their repasts first in one room and then in another, and eating mostly with their fingers too, owing to the rarity of forks. Let us, therefore, rather look upon the modern imitation archaic *salle-à-manger* as a passing fashion, and let us seek the ideal French dining-room in the styles of Louis XIII. to Louis XVI. and even in the Neo-Greek or Pompeian style



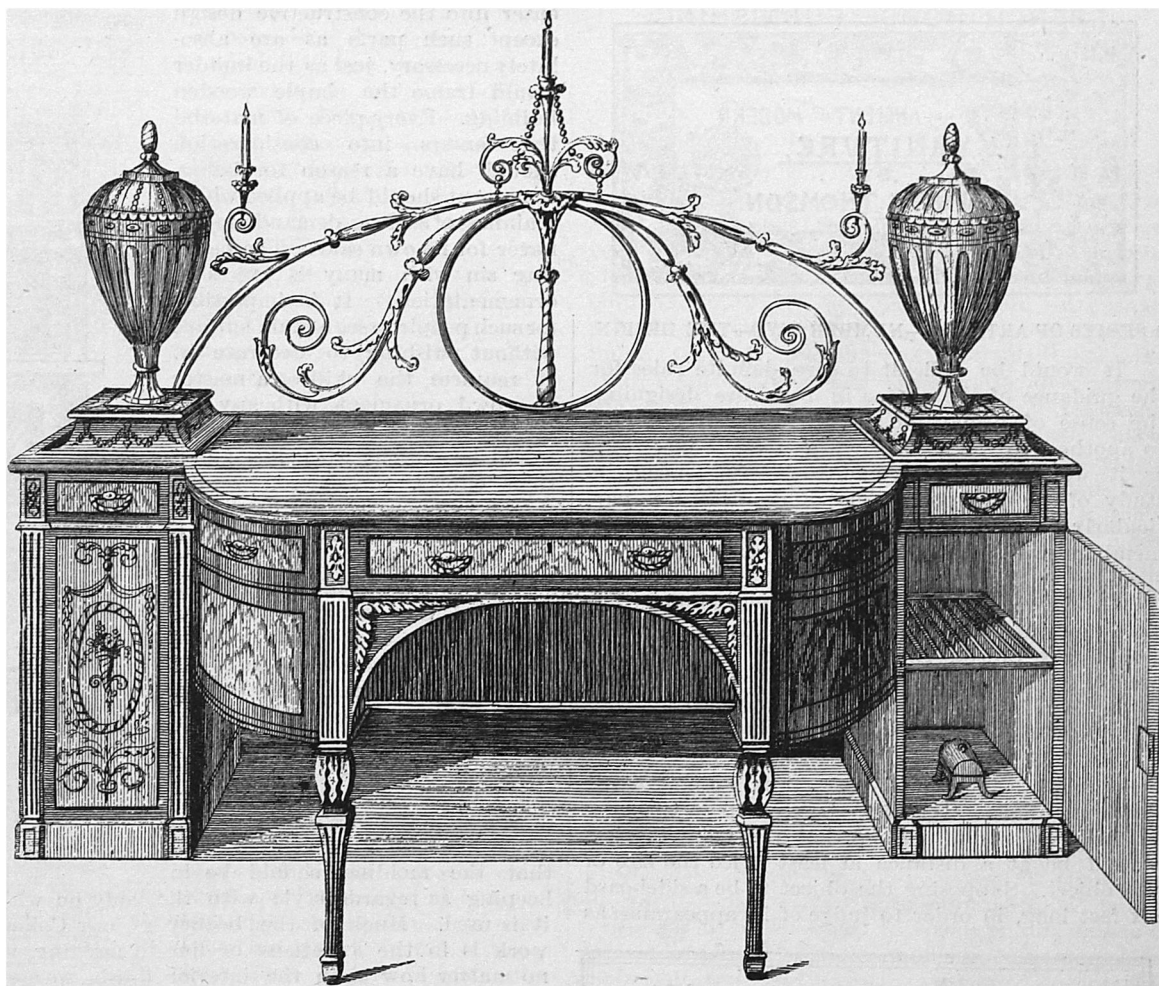


which still has its advocates and which affords an excellent opportunity for decorative painting in the classical style. In the Pompeian palace, built by Prince Napoleon in the Avenue Montaigne under the Second Empire, the dining-room is lighted by a large window divided into three by two pilasters; the ceiling is panelled in caissons and the walls are panelled in red, blue, and yellow, which colors serve as the ground for the most delicate ornamentation that the Pompeian style created; slender columns, trellis, long filaments of plants, light garlands, blond or vermeil fruits, bows of ribbons, birds, cups, musical instruments, chimères, intermingled discreetly with ears of corn, fish and game that reveal the destination of the room without sating the eyes before sating the stomach, as is often the result of our modern game and fruit pieces, fitter for the sign of a butcher's shop than for the eyes of delicate gourmets.

In the accompanying cut is shown a specimen of the style of decoration adopted by the Directory; it represents a door and pilasters designed by Bellanger for the house of Mlle. Dervieux, a celebrity of the period. The basis of the decoration is gray, white, and yellow stucco; the panel over the door is a bas relief of white stucco on a blue ground; the door is mahogany; the medallions and panels of the door are in yellow wood framed with silver fillets and painted with arabesques and subjects; the pilasters are of Sienna yellow covered with silver arabesques.

Of dining-rooms with walls of marble or stone I need say nothing special; they are to be found in some of the old French town and country mansions, but in our modern economical times the example of the architects of the past is not often followed, in this respect at least.

Tapestry, as a covering for the walls of a dining-room, is open to the objection that it absorbs smells; nevertheless, I know three or four delicious rooms hung with tapestry where many a delicate dinner has been eaten and where no odor remains. After all, a delicately prepared dinner does not smell so very strongly, and in the country where fresh air is abundant, I should willingly hang a small dining-room with choice tapestry. The dining-room of M. Edward de Goncourt, at Auteuil, might serve as a model; it is a small room, quite a small room, with the corners filled in—what the French call *pans coupés*—in short an oblong octagon. There is wainscoting up to the chair rail, and the rest of the wall is entirely covered with tapestry; a series of panels after the designs of Le Prince and Huet, with a fantastic landscape background peopled with an adorably false creation, beribboned shepherdesses, Tircises with powdered hair, women spinning flax, huntresses clad in the scarlet coats of Vanloo's pictures, and little fawn-like peasants riding on goats, and all this enchanted and theatrical rusticity standing out on a white ground, that delicious creamy white, that forms the atmosphere of the fine tapestries of the eighteenth century. The ceiling is covered by an Aubusson tapestry representing Lancret's composition 'L'Adolescence.' On these walls of woven painting that suffer no decoration, are fixed two



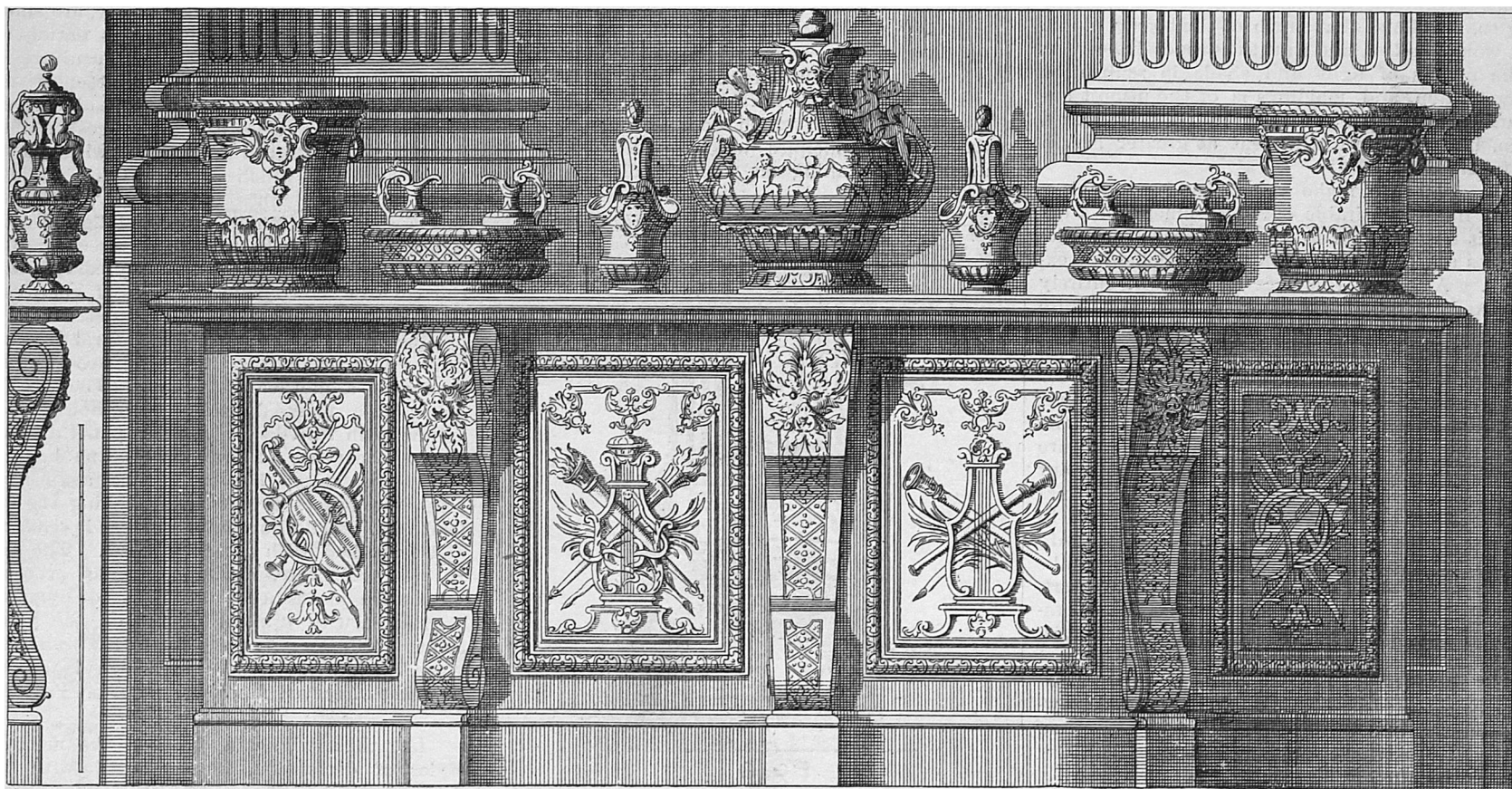
A SIDEBOARD WITH VASE KNIFE CASES.

large brackets of gilt bronze with their rich conventional Louis XV. foliage, out of which the candle socket springs like the vigorous efflorescence of a knotted tree branch, a robust and freely elegant piece of work such as Meissonier and Gouthière and their contemporaries alone knew how to mold. The furniture of this dining-room is simple in the extreme; a plain table and eight chairs carved by Mazaros, and in one corner a dumb-waiter, or servante, in rosewood with gilt bronze corner ornaments and a white marble top surrounded by a brass gallery. In the other corner is a beautifully carved Japanese screen. On the chimney piece a marble statuette of Falconet and a pair of three-branched flambeaux. This is the *salle-à-manger* of a *biboteur*, and of course few, very few can ever hope to have tapestries and bronzes like those of M. de Goncourt; still the exquisite effect of the decoration requires mention.

One other dining-room, famous in modern Paris for the notable good dinners given there, deserves notice on account of the decoration of the walls and ceiling. It is wainscoted up to the chair rail, and all the woodwork of the wainscot, doors and windows, is painted the color of *sang de boeuf* and the tone and surface of Japanese lacquer obtained approximately and sufficiently by

the polishing and varnishing processes used by coach painters. The walls and ceiling are entirely covered by Japanese leather paper in different tones of gold and bronze, framed and fixed by panels of various dimensions arranged, of course, symmetrically and with regard to the proportions of the wall and the wainscot. In this dining-room there is nothing but the table, the chairs, a carved Renaissance coffer with some flower vases on it, two little Indian carved sideboards for ornament simply, and a big Japanese jardinière with a tall palm tree in it. To resume, then, we have for the wall decoration of the *salle-à-manger*, the choice between the lambris of the styles of Louis XIII., XIV., XV., and XVI., stamped leather, Japanese lacquer, paper or decorative painting, whether in the Neo-Greek or in any other style.

The furniture of the French *salle-à-manger* beyond the table and chairs is, as we have seen, rather limited and depends largely on the fancy and taste of the master of the house. Round the walls will naturally be placed consoles and dumb-waiters as convenience may dictate. A cartel or a bracket clock and pedestals for jardinières, busts or vases will not be out of place. As for monumental buffets, side-boards and dressers, they have no place in the Parisian dining-room.



BUFFET.